

# MINUTES

## Quarterly Meeting of the MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION

Held, pursuant to notice

Tuesday, August 12, 2008 — 10:00 AM

205 Jefferson Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, Jefferson City, MO

### I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Roll Call  
In attendance: **Chair Joseph Frank; Vice Chair Bernadette Miller; Member John Comerford; Member Philip Prewitt; Member Carson Ross**
- C. Introductions  
Guests and staff present.  
Guest: **Richard Heigert, MAVO; James Whitfield, Western Area Supervisor, MO Military Funeral Honors Program; John Eckhoff, St. Louis County Veterans, Kathy Sturgeon, St. Louis County Veterans; Krista Zurkamer, MMPEC; Glen Struchtemeyer, VAMC-St. Louis; Arvid West, Former Commissioner; Billy Montgomery, DAV; Nathan Witt, VAMC-Columbia; Douglas Bragg, St. Louis VA Regional Office; David VanMeter, VAMC-Columbia; Stephen Gaither, VAMC-Columbia; Birch Wright, VAMC Fayetteville Arkansas; George Newell, MAVO; Richard Aubuchon, Lt. Governor's Office.**  
Staff: **Hal Dulle, Executive Director; Jill Talken, Executive Secretary; Bryan Hunt, Interim Deputy Director; Susan McNary, General Counsel; Kim Cleeton, Interim Assistant Superintendent; Pat Rowe Kerr, State Veteran Ombudsman; Stan Baughn, Director Veterans Service Program; Julie Miller, Fiscal & Admin. Manager; Daniel Bell, Public Information Officer; Diane Kemna, Accountant; Jamie Reed, Outreach Assistant; Mark Jones, Veterans Service Officer**

### II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Approval of April 17<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Ross made a motion to adopt minutes of the April 17<sup>th</sup> meeting. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.
- B. Approval of April 17<sup>th</sup> Closed Commission Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Ross made a motion to adopt minutes of the April 17<sup>th</sup> closed meeting. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Chairman Frank welcomed Philip Prewitt, recently appointed Commissioner to the meeting.

### **III. MANAGEMENT REPORTS**

#### **1. Executive Director Comments: Hal Dulle**

- Introduction of new central office staff: Diane Kemna, Accountant and Mark Jones Veteran Service Officer
- The Commission staff is continuing its Veterans outreach efforts in all programs
- Homes Program has increased census in all seven Homes serving over 1330 veterans and in some Homes we are near or at 99%
- Cemetery Program increasing interment causing us to seek additional federal monies for new columbarium walls to accommodate a record number of veterans being cremated
- Current engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan coupled with our Vietnam Veterans coming into the system has caused an increase in claims for service officers.
- Operation Outreach program is assisting current and recently deployed veterans and their families in dealing with hardships and difficulties associated with the Veterans deployment especially those who are wounded in the line of duty.
- MVC staff is engaged on national levels to ensure that state veterans services and policies are maximized to benefit Missouri's Veterans
- Continue to partner with other state agencies to maximize benefits and services to our Veterans
- Planning annual conference to update Commission's Strategic Plan

#### **2. Financial Report: Julie Miller Fiscal & Administrative Manager**

- Distributed Statement of Revenues and Expenditures for Home Fund, Veterans Trust Fund, Federal Fund, VCCITF and General Revenue Fund.

#### **3. Homes Program: Bryan Hunt, Interim Deputy Director**

- Vivian Reins new Administrator at the Cape Girardeau Veterans Home
- Jan Rau new Interim Administrator at St. Louis Veterans Home
- Homes currently at 99% occupancy

- 269 more Veterans were cared for in our Veterans Homes due to additional FTE in FY08
- With the increase staffing the Homes was able to hire aids through our Domestic Aid Program which provides non direct care to our veterans. 198 aids were hired across all seven homes and 54 of them became certified CNA's.
- July 31 held a recognition ceremony at the St. Louis Veterans Home honoring Senator Green and former Senator Gross for their support in legislation last year that increased our nursing staff and residence census.
- Resident and family satisfaction surveys show overall 93% satisfaction with facility and operations
- 948 Veterans on Homes waiting list

#### 4. Construction: Hal Dulle, Executive Director

- Ft. Leonard Wood Veterans Cemetery pre bid meeting scheduled for August 14 or 15<sup>th</sup>. The estimated cost for the construction project is \$8 million. Projected winter 2009 dedication date. Staffing will be hired 6 months prior to opening. The VA will provide training on the cemetery system for the new Director and current State Cemetery Directors will mentor on state regulations.
- St. Louis CBOC project is pending. VA is having problems securing funding to build a new clinic on site and there has been some discussion on trying to get state funding to build the new clinic and then lease to VA to recoup these funds.
- Cameron Veterans Home roof project should be under construction by mid-September 2008.
- Currently funds are available to design new roof for Mexico Veterans Home and will be asking for construction funds in FY2010 C.I. budget. Commission has approached community and leaders regarding Mexico Veterans Home replacement. Current facility is 24 years old.
- Due to additional space needed for Cape Girardeau CBOC the Director of VA hospital in Poplar Bluff has indicated they were going to look at off-site space.
- St. Louis Veterans Home emergency generator contract has been awarded. Bids on this project came in above anticipated cost so the Commission has decided to complete the oldest four facilities and then ask for a supplemental request for the remaining facilities.
- Outpatient Clinic in Jefferson City will open September 26 on Edgewood Drive and Branson has announced location

this week for new CBOC and will schedule first appointments September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

5. Veterans Service Program: Stan Baughn, Director

- As of the end of FY 08 the Compensation and Pension dollars being paid to Missouri Veterans exceeded \$700,000,000
- Virtual Veterans Software program has been implemented and some reports are now available. VSO's had over 107 thousand client contacts and completed over 26 thousand forms that resulted in over 12 thousand claims. Digital record management is working to refine the reports process so that reports may be sorted by region, county, VSO and zip code.
- Annual VSO training conference is scheduled for Monday November 17-21<sup>st</sup> at the Sheraton in St. Louis.

6. Cemetery Program: Bryan Hunt, Interim Deputy Director

- Bryan Hunt and the four Cemetery Directors attended the National Cemetery Directors Conference in July. Missouri Cemetery Program received great recognition.
- Letter of appreciation to Springfield Cemetery staff from a family member of a deceased Veteran was shared with Commissioners.
- Bryan Hunt is working with Jacksonville Cemetery Director on marketing efforts to increase burial numbers
- As of July 31<sup>st</sup> 5,971 burials have been conducted and they have 17,586 pre-certifications.

7. VSO Grants: Stan Baughn, Director Veterans Service Program

- Initial notices for submission of grants request were sent out toward the end of June. Grant request were received from all 7 participants and initial award letters were sent out August 1, 2008. Awards were based on last years awards. The additional \$250,000 funds approved by the legislature last session will be allocated to the service organizations in the near future. Bryan Hunt and Stan Baughn are preparing to visit all the VAMC facilities starting in September. Each service organization will have questions of a general nature that MVC ask them to respond to as well as questions to be answered by the VSO's from each organization. MVC sent proposed questions to the service organizations for comments. MVC

will look at adequacy of facilities, HIPPA compliance, privacy issues.

8. Special Programs: Pat Rowe Kerr, State Veterans Ombudsman and Stan Baughn, Director Services to Veterans Program

- Commissioner Miller reported on the Women Veterans Program. Karen Etzler accepted the position of full time Women Veterans Coordinator for the State of Missouri. Missouri is the first state to have such position. Secretary Peake has announced that each state will be required to have a full time Women Coordinator this year. Ms. Etzler has received many compliments regarding Missouri's program. Ms. Etzler has attended several events.
- Pat Rowe Kerr distributed Operation Outreach packet to Commissioners.
- Ms. Kerr introduced Jamie Reed, Ombudsman Assistant
- Operation Outreach Program has coordinated over \$2 million in resources to assist current and recently deployed and returning service members and their families in dealing with hardships and difficulties associated with their deployment, especially those who are wounded in the line of duty.
- Operation Outreach Program working with other agencies in developing a billboard campaign
- Power of 11 Cents – started contacting schools and speakers
- "Support Your Troops"/Freedom Walk scheduled 9/11 in Jefferson City at the State Capitol
- August 15<sup>th</sup> attending the Signing of the Army Family Covenant Ceremony at Ft. Leonard Wood.
- Stan Baughn reported that Rebecca Bradley, Minority Veterans Coordinator has laid out outreach plans in the following months to include a Town Hall Meeting in Kansas City on August 30<sup>th</sup> and several other initiatives. Commissioner Comerford expressed interest in expanding the Minority Outreach Program to St. Louis. Mr. Dulle stated this position has been included in the 2010 budget request in addition to more Service Officers and an assistant for the Minority Veterans Coordinator in Kansas City. Missouri is the first state to have a full time Minority Veterans Coordinator.
- Stan Baughn reported Gerry Hodge, Incarcerated Veterans Reentry program Coordinator has seen over 3,000 Veterans, filed several service connected compensation claims, obtained DD214's, helped find shelters to prevent

homelessness, and helped locate employment opportunities. Currently there is over 3,500 Veterans incarcerated in the Department of Corrections. Of these approximately 25 are women. In collaboration with workforce development MVC is starting a program to assist ex-offenders with employment. Every three month MVC will hire an ex-offender. During this time the ex-offender will work closely with Workforce Development to find full time employment. 700 to 800 incarcerated Veterans are released annually.

- Stan Baughn reported that the MO Military Family Relief Fund has raised approximately \$284,000 in the last 3 years and has approved approximately \$240,000 in expenditures. The fund is running low on money and is replenished only by donations. Pat Rowe Kerr is currently working to organize a concert in the February timeframe in Columbia in order to raise funds for the program.
- Bonnie McNeill-Boyt, Director Workforce Development reported on her involvement in training on a National level. She is working with other state Directors in developing a nationwide accreditation program for service officers in all states.

9. Legal Report: Susan McNary, General Counsel

- Working to update the Missouri Veterans Commission Policy and Procedures Manual. Completed Cemetery Program Policy and Procedures Manual.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Adoption of Resolution 08-04 – Missouri Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board

- The Commission recognizes that small businesses are good for economic development and is committed to maintaining an environment in which small businesses and others are free to raise questions or concerns. The General Counsel is designated as the Commission's liaison to the Missouri Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board.
- Commissioner Ross made a motion to adopt Resolution 08-04. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. By a voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

B. Other Business:

- Pursuant to HB1678 Chairman Frank appointed Arvid E. West, Jr. to serve as an ex-officio member from the Commission to serve on the Missouri Military Preparedness Enhancement Commission.

C. Guest Remarks/Public Comment:

Glenn Struchtemeyer, Director VAMC St. Louis

- Dr. Peter Almenoff has transferred to a position in Washington DC. His new title is Assistant Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Quality & Safety. James Floyd has been named the Interim VISN 15 Network Director
- Discussion was held regarding expansion of the St. Louis CBOC
- VAMC -John Cochran has awarded valet parking contract effective September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- VAMC – John Cochran working on building parking garage
- Final stages on design approval for the Fisher House in St. Louis. Facility will include 20 private rooms for Veterans/Veterans Families at no charge for services. Anticipate groundbreaking ceremony in Fall 2008.
- Mental Health Recovery Center expansion was funded and approved this year. Center will provide intensive case management outpatient care for mental health services in the metropolitan area.
- VAMC-John Cochran working on moving dental services into new space, dialysis, and opening new open heart surgery program, and expanding the cardiology program.
- Jefferson Barracks is renovating its Spinal Cord Injury Unit
- VA expanding homeless program through a per diem and grant program combining both state, federal and city of St. Louis resources.
- PTSD program has expanded Mental Health providers
- Opened Saturday clinics for orthopedics at John Cochran due to backlog
- Jefferson Barracks campus is targeted for major construction project
- Paid over 2,200 employees at the St. Louis complex

Stephen Gaither, Public Relations VAMC Columbia

- VA looking at expanding space at the CBOC in Camdenton. Currently have not found suitable space at this time.

- VA expanded their Homeless Programs with a new HUD contract
- Wrapping up design phase of the replacement and renovation of the operating suites at VAMC –Columbia. Groundbreaking in February 2009.
- More than 31,000 Veterans are receiving care through the VAMC- Columbia
- Welcome Home Ceremony for OIF/OEF Veterans on Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup> at VAMC-Columbia
- Welcome Home Ceremony for OIF/OEF Veterans on September 25 at VAMC-Kansas City
- Provided PR support for the 28<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Wheelchair Games, July 25-29, 2008.

Birch Wright, Executive Assistant to the Associate Director, VAMC Fayetteville, Arkansas

- Secretary Peake has announced openings of several new CBOC's nationwide. VISN 16 is recipient to two of those new facilities.
- VAMC Fayetteville is expanding. Recently they have had to lease offsite space for mental health clinics, audiology, dental clinic and women's health due to increase in veterans caring for.
- Upgraded TBI evaluations now secondary level screeners for new patients coming back
- Medical School in Little Rock is expanding and opening a satellite campus in North Little Rock. Residents from the Medical School will train at VAMC.
- VAMC is working on obtaining additional land from previous Reserve Center site
- Budget update
- 35% of workload is in Mt. Vernon
- Currently 1,100 employees at VAMC Fayetteville
- Plans to open Veterans Center in Springfield in late 2009
- Possible priority eights re-enrollment in FY 09.

George Newell, President MAVO

- Legislative session discussion
- Requested list of legislative items from the Commission
- Sending out questionnaire to primary candidate winners regarding Veterans issues.
- February 2, 2009 "Veterans Appreciation Day" at the State Capitol

- Chairman Frank suggested the Commission and Service Organizations meet to discuss veterans issues

Jim Whitfield, Western Area Supervisor, MO Military Funeral Honors Program

- Funeral Honors Program has coordinated over 70,000 services to date

Krista Zurkamer, Coordinator, MMPEC

- HB 1678 signed into law June 11, 2008. Allows the Chairman of the Missouri Veterans Commission as an ex-officio member of the Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission and vice versa. A letter was distributed to Commissioners naming Dalton Wright, Chairman of MMPEC as an ex-officio member on the Missouri Veterans Commission.
- Next MMPEC meeting will be October 15 at Whiteman Air Force Base.

Richard Aubuchon, Chief of Staff, Lt. Governor's Office

- Expressed Lt. Governor Kinder interest in advocating for Veterans

Douglas Bragg, Assistant Director St. Louis VA Regional Office

- The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 or "New GI Bill" has been enacted into law. New bill provides educational assistance to individuals who served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001

John Eckhoff, Manager, St. Louis County Human Services

- Thanked everyone for their support during his son Josh's recovery

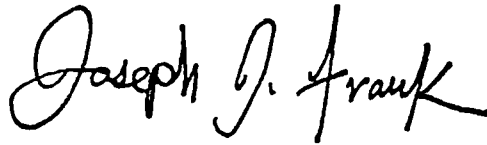
D. Next Meeting

The next Commission meeting will be held on Thursday, November 5, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. in the County Council Chambers in Clayton, Missouri.

Commissioner Ross made a motion to close the meeting pursuant to Section 610.021 (1) and (3) RSMo. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion. By a voice vote the motion to close the meeting was passed unanimously.

The meeting was re-opened.

With no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph J. Frank". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "F".

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Joe Frank, Chairman & Acting Secretary